



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

LARAMIE REGION

MARCH 2016



Anglers enjoy ice fishing

North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd was checking fishermen at Wheatland Reservoir #3 and talked to three men and a four-year-old child who were ice fishing. The child was sitting in the truck because he was cold, but said he had a great time catching a fish.

The group was from Colorado and said they were appreciative of Wyoming's fishing program. They had been fishing in Wyoming a few times before, but this time they had luck!

Warden Todd asked what they were using for bait and they said they were using dead minnows with the heads removed. The men also took advantage of the special ice fishing regulations allowing them to use six rods each.



Granite Reservoir Ice Fishing Tournament

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak worked at the Granite Ice Fishing Tournament in Curt Gowdy State Park in February. Warden Blajszczak was checking fisherman for compliance to laws and regulations, as well as visiting with people in the tournament.

Despite a constant 25-30 mph wind with strong gusts over 50 mph, the tournament still had fairly good attendance and fisherman were successful in catching several large fish.

Removing noxious weeds at Rawhide WHMA

Laramie Region Habitat and Access crews worked with contractors to remove Russian olive and salt cedar from 125 acres at the Rawhide Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department partnered with the Upper North Platte River Weed Management Area, Bureau of Land Management, Goshen County Weed and Pest, National Wild Turkey Federation, Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust, Local CRM, and neighboring landowners to remove the plants and treat 25 miles of North Platte River and tributaries.

To date, the Partnership has removed more than 10,000 acres of Russian olive and more than 2,000 acres of Salt Cedar. The noxious weeds pose a threat to wildlife habitat on the riparian area. These invasive species outcompete native riparian species that have the best value for wildlife.

WGFD, partners and local volunteers will plant lanceleaf cottonwood, peachwood willow, chokecherry, silver buffalo berry and several native grass species within the next year.



Photo by Gary Stone

Trail camera stolen from mule deer research site

Biologists are hoping the person who stole a trail camera that was collecting data on mule deer migration will come forward and return the equipment.

The trail camera was set up beneath a highway underpass along Interstate 80 west of Laramie to collect data on mule deer migrations. "The data from this camera are very important to us," said Laramie Wildlife Biologist Lee Knox. "We use it to learn about the

timing of migration and how mule deer use the underpasses."

A business card inserted inside the camera contains Knox's contact information. He hopes someone comes forward and returns it. "We would like to retrieve the data from the camera. This data is important to our research."

Anyone with information can contact Knox at (307) 777-4046 ext. 231.

Estimating mule deer populations in the Platte Valley

Saratoga Wildlife Biologist Will Schultz and Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton participated in the Platte Valley mule deer sightability survey. Other Game and Fish personnel who assisted were Mark Cufaude, Dillon Herman, and Teal Joseph.

The crew used a helicopter to allow them to count every deer in sections of various deer densities. The technique estimates deer that are missed by observers by considering the amount of snow cover, screening cover, vegetative cover, group size and activity of

every deer observed. The Sightability survey provides an abundance estimate of the deer population.

The group observed 11,594 mule deer in 1,399 groups during 42 hours of helicopter flight time. The abundance estimate corrected for sightability was 16,600 mule deer. This survey, along with population modeling, indicates that the Platte Valley mule deer population is increasing and approaching the population objective of 16,000 animals.



Winter can be tough on wildlife

Winter loosened its grip in the Upper Platte Valley in February, with warmer temperatures and plenty of wind.

In the nick of time, snow melted on crucial big game winter ranges exposing grasses and shrubs for wildlife to eat. So far, wildlife managers see fairly normal winter mortality of big game animals.

However, wintering deer and elk show signs that the winter is tough when they find unprotected haystacks on which to feed.

The oldest and youngest animals, as well as those with injuries and sickness, are the first to weaken and die in the winter. People sometimes find those animals in sheltered areas near homes, tree lines, haystacks and urban areas.

Where large numbers of big game animals congregate for the winter, even the amount of normal winter mortality can be somewhat alarming to residents. Wildlife officers are often called upon to euthanize sick and dying wildlife and remove carcasses from

residential areas. In the photo above, Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton removes several carcasses from suburban properties east of town. When disease is suspected, tissue samples are submitted to pathologists at the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory.



Elk found an unprotected haystack southeast of Saratoga to supplement their native winter forage. Photo by Biff Burton



More than 100 mule deer spent the winter at Saratoga's Old Baldy Club golf course near Saratoga. Photo by Biff Burton

Sportsman's Paradise at UW basketball game

Laramie Region personnel participated in the Sportsman's Paradise event during the University of Wyoming's men's basketball game against Utah State. Game and Fish had a booth in the concourse of the arena-auditorium.

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood and North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd ran a booth on behalf of the Wyoming Game Warden's Association, teaching about the use of catch-poles to handle wild animals.



LAW ENFORCEMENT



Pronghorn poached near Cheyenne

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is seeking tips on a pronghorn antelope that was poached Saturday at the Otto Road Shooting Range west of Cheyenne.

The doe pronghorn was found on the long-distance range and had been shot with a .223 rifle. Blajszczak said the shot was intentional because the recovered bullet showed no sign of ricocheting.

The animal was shot sometime before 3:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Anyone with information on this case is asked to call the Stop Poaching Tip Line at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847) or at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>.

Oops! Goose season is closed

Wheatland Game Warden David Ellsworth received a report of several goose hunters out the day after the season closed. He observed the hunters from Fairview road where they shot several times at incoming geese and then retrieved a carcass.

He contacted the hunters, who stated that they thought it was the last day of the season. Warden Ellsworth produced a copy of the regulations and indicated where the season closed the previous day. The hunters then produced their own set of regulations, which turned out to be from the previous year. The date of the season closure had changed by one day.



News from the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center



The crew at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center made considerable progress on the new sheep handling facility.

The exterior alleyways are nearly complete. They also worked on the interior of the building, finishing the alleys and chute system, sealing the floor and installing plastic paneling on the ceiling and walls.

The interior of the building is designed with plastic wall panels and special floor paint for easy cleaning and disinfection after handling sheep.

The facility was the first of its kind and remains one of the country's leading state wildlife research facilities.



Habitat and Access crew comes to the rescue

Last summer, a gabion (a type of retaining wall) washed out due to high water and made our irrigation ditch and pond non-functional.

The Habitat and Access crew came out for a week in February to help replace the gabion. With their equipment and a good number of very large concrete blocks put in place, hopefully we will have a full ditch and pond this coming spring.

Many thanks to the Habitat and Access Crew for their hard work!

Firearms training, inspections in the Laramie Region

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak recently taught two separate firearms training sessions in Cheyenne for the Wyoming Game and Fish Law Enforcement Officers in the Laramie Region.

The sessions included a rifle, pistol and shotgun refresher course and the regional firearms qualifications and training.

This training is conducted twice a year in the Laramie Region to keep officer skill sets at their peak and to have officers complete required firearms proficiency qualifications.

Warden Blajszczak also inspected the Laramie region's law en-

forcement shotguns and pistols that are owned and provided by Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

As the armorer for the region, Blajszczak inspects all Game and Fish Department owned firearms periodically to the armorer level to ensure that they function properly for each officer.

Overall, the weapons in the Laramie Region needed very little armorer work or parts, but Blajszczak intends to continue inspecting weapons periodically to insure they function properly for the safety of the officer and the public.

Heavy snow proves challenging for wildlife

A major snow storm hit southeast Wyoming in early February, dumping 2-3 feet of snow in the Laramie Range west of Wheatland. The storm was followed by several days of 50+ mph winds.

As a result, Habitat Biologist Ryan Amundson and Wheatland Wildlife Biologist Martin Hicks had to move pronghorn off Interstate 25 that were trying to migrate down to Goshen Hole.

Luckily the interstate was closed, which allowed the men to get the pronghorn safely off the interstate.

The storm most likely caused some winter mortality in pronghorn and mule deer, but winds did blow off ridge tops to allow forage and protection.

In the photo at right, mule deer in hunt area 64 near Wheatland try to navigate through the deep snow. Photo by Martin Hicks.



Snowdrifts in elk pens

While weather has been very mild for a good part of the winter, the first week of February brought 18 inches of snow and strong winds to the Tom Thorne/Beth Williams Wildlife Research Center at Sybille.

Snow drifts up to eight feet high filled the elk alleyways and corrals! The snow had to be cleaned out daily to keep elk from walking over the fences. Luckily the staff was on top of it and kept the drifts cleared away so no elk could sneak out over the snow.

Meet the Wardens in Cheyenne

Hunters and anglers can stop by Sportsman's Warehouse in Cheyenne on Saturday, March 19 to chat with a game warden.

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak and North Lara-

mie Game Warden Kelly Todd will be on hand to visit with anyone who drops by between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Sportsman's Warehouse is located at 3745 E. Lincoln Way.

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